**21st Century Learning Implementation Plan**

Jessica Monson

St. Mary’s University of Minnesota

“Mom, can I watch YouTube, “Mom can I play on my tablet.” I never thought, even a few years ago, that I would’ve heard those words coming out of my 3 year old’s mouth. But yes, those *are* the questions coming out of my son’s mouth these days. I watch him maneuver around on the IPAD with ease. Not to mention, I can’t ever remember teaching him the actual steps of how to work the IPAD. He is just learning by doing and watching.

I have to admit I had some mixed emotions about this class. The question buzzing around in my head was, “How am I going to incorporate technology with very young children when The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time before the age of 2?” (Pediatrics, 2011) Screen time meaning the obvious- TV, but that also means IPads and other tablets, computers, smartphones etc. However after reading the 1st chapter of Tony Wagner’s book, The Global Achievement Gap, it was very clear that 21st Century Learning was much more then just *using* the IPAD. “We need to ensure that students are differently educated for the future” (2008, p. 9). Teachers need to encourage learners to ask good questions and think outside the box, adapt to change, think critically, access and analyze information, get along well with others, be leaders, and communicate well.

Wagner describes two survival skills to be communicating well with others and effectively collaborating across networks (2008). This really rang a bell with me after my husband’s newly purchased work IPhone kept beeping one evening around 9:00 at night. I asked, “Who is that? Who is trying to get a hold of you?” To which he said, “Well Malaysia is awake now and they are all sending me emails.” This is the way employers communicate now and they way of our future. Before I took this class, my criticism was, “How are children going to communicate well with others when they are tuned into their phones and tablets all day?” Nevertheless, this world is changing. There are no boundaries and the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with others is at our fingertips. Even ten years ago researches found that technology was increasing children positive interactions with others. Clements and Sarama found that, “Computers serve as catalysts of social interaction” (p. 340, 2002).

Pretti-Frontczak, Jung, and Pfeiffer-Fiala reviewed several articles where early childhood educators could infuse appropriate technology into their profession (2010, p. 197). One of the examples included using video-conferencing to deliver intervention strategies to preschool teachers and assistances in an inclusion setting. Early intervention teachers used the web-based tool, Skype, to consult with the preschool teacher to problem solve strategies that would help the student participate in the inclusion setting. This allowed the preschool teachers to take the knowledge shared to them and apply it to their classroom. Another example Pretti-Frontczak shared was a web-based tool, Infant-Net. This tool allowed mothers to record and create their own videos or interact with videos online and receive feedback in a coaching-type interaction.

There are many Web 2.0 tools that I would like to incorporate into my everyday routine. As I researched Web 2.0 tools I found it quite overwhelming to think that I needed to be using each of these tools right now. Therefore, I told myself that I was going to focus on a few tools now and continue to add another throughout the year.

My hope is that Evernote will be a tool used to replace the current triplicate paper home-visit notes our team has used for years. Not only will Evernote save a few trees it will also save time and increase my ability to stay organized. With Evernote I plan to have a folder for every child on my caseload. Each week I will record the home visit note in the Evernote application. I’ll then be able to share the home visit note easily with the parents, coworkers or any other members of the team. I can easily record websites or videos that were taken or shared with the family. One issue I thought before delving into Evernote was, “Will I be able to access Evernote without the need for internet?” Not every family I work with has internet or Wi-Fi connection but after researching, the answer is, “Yes, I will be able to use Evernote at a home that does not have internet.” I will need to email the note to everyone on the team when I return back to the office however, but it is not anything extra because at the moment, I have to come back to the office and make photocopies of the paper copy.

I work very closely with other service providers, so one of the challenges I foresee will be getting other coworkers “on board.” The current paper and pen system has been used to communicate and collaborate with parents, caregivers, and other team members. Through that system ideas and resources are shared. It is also used for attendance, analyzing data, and scheduling. I will be able to complete all of these tasks with Evernote. Making the switch will take some getting used to but the transition appears to be seamless and a cost saver. When school is back into full swing this fall I plan to do a mini education session during our weekly meetings. It will be a learning process for all of us and I’ll know that I was successful if I use Evernote with at least 3 of my students for the year.

Remind101 will be another tool I will try and incorporate into my professional routine. A trend I have been noticing with families is the increase of text use and the decrease of families responding to phone calls and voicemail. This has made it difficult to get a hold of families to relay information. Currently I use my personal cell phone to send texts. Not only does this cost money, there is always a risk of my personal information getting to others that shouldn’t have it. I’m hoping that Remind 101 will save me money but also keep the phone numbers and other personal information confidential. I would like to use Remind 101 to remind families of an upcoming visit but also to notify them to check their email to learn about an upcoming event or speaker coming to the community. If I’m able to get 3 families “on-board” this year to use Remind 101, I will be a happy camper.

Feedly is Web 2.0 tool I will use as well. Several parents I work with have blogs to share their journey of having a child with special needs. With Feedly, I will be able to follow each blog without having to log-in to each blog site individually. This will save me time and also notify me when a blog has been updated. Reading these blogs allows a window of understanding into the lives of my families. It is a whole new perspective that I would not get in a “regular” home visit.

Before this class I really never thought about following the blogs of other educators as well as other “gurus” in the field of early intervention. So I’m very excited to have found the blog of Robin McWilliam. He is one of “ground-breakers” for the paradigm shift in early intervention. I plan on following his blog as well as another early intervention blog as part of my continued professional development.

Many fellow colleagues argue that young children should have limited access to computers and other technology. However, research is saying that early childhood is “missing the boat” (Parette, Quesenberry, & Blum, 2010). Parette et al states that early childhood educators need to understand and teach developmentally appropriate technology experiences so that children across all backgrounds are able to build their technology vocabulary. Therefore, children exiting their preschool experiences will then be entering public school with a critical 21st century technology literacy background (2010).

“Mom it’s downloading…” How *does* my son know what downloading means and how *does* he know how to download. There is no doubt the next generation are 21 Century Learners. They learn differently and have a whole new vocabulary and thought process then the generation of today. Prensky states, “Students have not just changed incrementally from those of the past, nor simply changed their slang, clothes, body adornments, or styles, as has happened between generations previously. A really big discontinuity has taken place. One might even call it a “singularity” – an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back. (2001, p. 1). Therefore, it’s our responsibility as teachers and members of this world to open the doors in an appropriate and purposeful way for our children and parents we work with.

# References

Clements, D. H. (2002). The role of technology in early childhood learning. *Teaching Children Mathematics* *, 8* (6), 340-343.

Parette, H. P., Quesenberry, A. C., & Blum, C. (2010). Missing the Boat with Technology Usage in Early Childhood Settings: A 21st Century View of Developmentally Appropriate Practice. *Early Childhood Education Journal* *, 37* (5), 335-343.

Pediatrics, A. A. (2011 йил 11-October). *American Academy of Pediatrics.* Retrieved 2013 йил 11-July from www2.aap.org: http://www2.aap.org/pressroom/mediaunder2.pdf

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon* *, 9* (5), 1-6.

Pretti-Frontczak, K. J.-F. (2010). Introduction to the special issue on web-based technologies. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* *, 29* (4), 197-200.

Wagner, T. (2008). *The Global Acheivement Gap.* New York: Basic Books.